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POLITICS

Mike Flynn's Lawyers Say He Is No Longer Joining Consulting Firm

Former Trump adviser's lawyers say deal with Stonington Global LLC is off



Former Trump national security adviser Mike Flynn, center, walks into the federal courthouse in Washington, D.C. Tuesday.
PHOTO: JIM LO SCALZO/EPA-EFE/REX/SHUTTE/EPA/SHUTTERSTOCK

By Julie Bykowicz

Updated July 10, 2018 7:00 p.m. ET

Hours after a new lobbying firm aimed at domestic and global clients announced it was partnering with former national security adviser Mike Flynn, attorneys for the embattled Mr. Flynn said the deal was off and the notice had been released as a result of a “misunderstanding” among the participants in Stonington Global LLC.

“General Flynn has not joined Stonington and did not personally issue any public statement,” Mr. Flynn’s attorneys Robert Kelner and Stephen Anthony said in a statement Tuesday. “He was aware that a statement was being drafted, but he did not intend that it be issued at this time.”

Mr. Flynn is awaiting sentencing for lying to federal investigators. His December guilty plea grew out of special counsel Robert Mueller’s probe into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. He agreed to cooperate with prosecutors and faces up to six months in jail.

Nick Muzin and Joey Allaham told The Wall Street Journal on Tuesday that they had started their firm with Mr. Flynn. They also launched a Stonington website and promotional video Tuesday.

“We cannot comment on General Flynn’s considerations about the timing of the announcement, but we have faith in his patriotism and long history of service to our country,” Messrs. Muzin and Allaham said after Mr. Flynn’s lawyers issued their statement. “We look forward to working together.”

Mr. Flynn was back in court Tuesday for the first time since his guilty plea, as U.S. District Judge Emmet Sullivan asked for an update on where the legal teams stand on his sentencing. The judge didn't set a sentencing date. He is scheduled to receive an update on the case's status from prosecutors and Mr. Flynn's lawyers by Aug. 24.

Stonington Global will provide consulting and lobbying services for U.S. and foreign clients, Messrs. Muzin and Allaham said in a statement. The firm also will "help private investors and sovereign-wealth funds develop and execute investment strategies." Mr. Flynn was to serve as its director of global strategy.

The firm hasn't announced any clients.

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Messrs. Muzin and Allaham previously worked together helping a failed political

candidate in Albania and on an influence campaign for the embattled Persian Gulf nation Qatar, according to foreign lobbying records. The pair ended their work with Qatar last month, after helping its royal family connect with U.S. Jewish leaders and associates of President Donald Trump to repair the country's image, according to interviews with Messrs. Muzin and Allaham and foreign lobbying reports filed with the Justice Department.

Neither man knew Mr. Flynn, they said, but Mr. Allaham approached him about joining the firm because "his experience speaks for itself."

"I said to him, your life should not be stopped," Mr. Allaham said. "He has experience all over the world. He can do a lot for us. We are very lucky to get a man like that."

Messrs. Muzin and Allaham declined to comment on Mr. Flynn's legal issues but said they are confident he will be a valuable and ethical player in their firm.

A retired Army lieutenant general, Mr. Flynn was an intelligence officer who took over the Pentagon's military intelligence operation. While serving as director of the Defense Intelligence Agency under then-President Barack Obama, he fell out with his superiors as he pushed for a harder line on the U.S. approach to Afghanistan and evolving al Qaeda threat. He was forced into early retirement in 2014 and later began working with

Mr. Trump on the campaign trial.

After his election, Mr. Trump named Mr. Flynn national security adviser. He served in the job just 23 days before being forced out by Mr. Trump, who said Mr. Flynn had lied to Vice President Mike Pence about the topics he discussed with Moscow's ambassador a month before the inauguration. Mr. Flynn had assured Mr. Pence that he did not discuss the Obama administration's sanctions on Russia for interfering in the presidential election.

Mr. Flynn pleaded guilty in December to lying about those conversations in interviews with federal investigators. Prosecutors said his contacts with Russian officials were coordinated with senior members of the president's transition team. Mr. Flynn "falsely stated" to the Federal Bureau of Investigation that he hadn't asked the Russian ambassador to refrain from escalating a response to the sanctions, prosecutors said.

The special counsel is leading an investigation into Russia's efforts to meddle in the election and potential links between those efforts and the Trump campaign, which both Russia and Mr.

Trump have denied.

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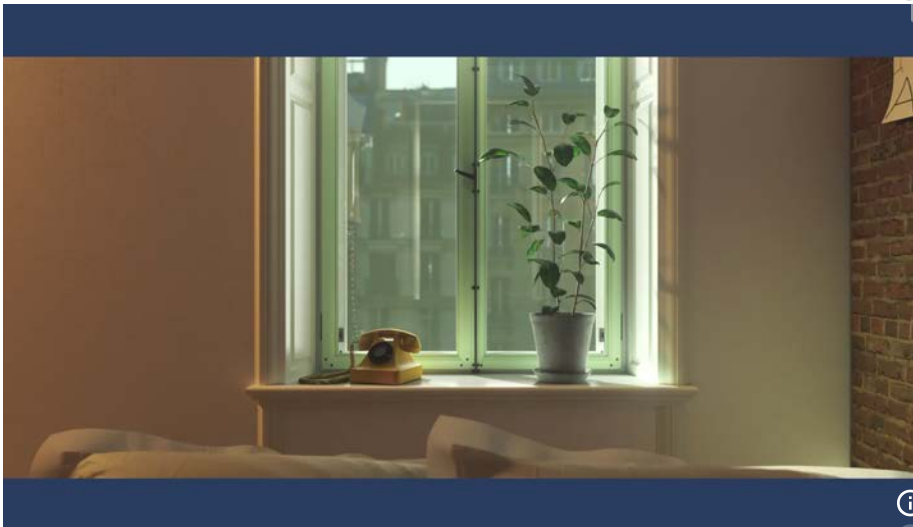
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As part of the guilty plea, Mr. Flynn also acknowledged having worked as an unregistered agent for Turkey in the weeks leading to the 2016 U.S. election. At the time, his Flynn Intel Group embarked on a project aimed at discrediting Turkish cleric Fethullah Gulen, who is living in Pennsylvania. Turkish government officials have pressed the U.S. to extradite him so that he can face terrorism charges in Turkey.

—Del Quentin Wilber and Aruna Viswanatha contributed to this article.

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